

VZCZCXRO3766
PP RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHCHI #0145 2731032
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P R 291032Z SEP 08
FM AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0850
INFO RUEHXS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0922

UNCLAS CHIANG MAI 000145

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NSC FOR PHU

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: VIOLENT CLASH BETWEEN PRO AND ANTI-THAKSIN GROUPS IN CHIANG MAI

REF: A. BANGKOK 2856 (PAD DEFIANCE)
[1](#)B. BANGKOK 2810 (SOMCHAI WONGSAWAT ELECTED)
[1](#)C. CHIANG MAI 133 (NORTHERN LABOR UNIONS)

Sensitive but unclassified; please handle accordingly.

Summary and Comment

[1](#)1. (SBU) A violent clash in Chiang Mai between members of the anti-government People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the pro-government United Front of Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) resulted in two injuries on the evening of Sunday, September 28. Police response was initially slow, but they restored order, and the situation remained calm on September 29. We have no indication that this clash signaled a new national-level UDD policy of violence; it may have been a local initiative. However, we cannot rule out future similar confrontations in Chiang Mai or other outlying provinces as the PAD intensifies its campaign against newly-elected Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat. Chiang Rai, Lamphun and Lampang Provinces, where the PAD is reportedly mobilizing its members through community radio, mobile phones, and the internet are key potential flashpoints to watch in northern Thailand. End Summary and Comment.

What Happened?

[1](#)2. (SBU) According to a contact in the National Intelligence Agency and two journalists, both of whom are former IV grantees, about 200 PAD supporters gathered at the local PAD community radio station on the afternoon of Sept. 28 to listen to two speakers, MP Pichanmeth Muangmanee of the Democrat Party, and former Bangkok Deputy Governor Samart Ritthapongasit. (Note: Ritthapongasit recently won his libel suit against former Prime Minister Samak, with the verdict handed down on Sept. 25.) After the assembly disbanded in the late afternoon, a number of its participants took to the streets on motorcycles and in cars around 5:00 or 6:00 pm to express their disapproval of PM Somchai, and to ask the citizens of Chiang Mai to join them in their hand-clapping campaign against his upcoming visit to Chiang Mai to pay homage to his wife's ancestors.

[1](#)3. (SBU) UDD members, apparently insulted by the PAD's actions, used the local pro-Thaksin community radio station to mobilize at the local pro-PAD radio station. The UDD also called for its members to halt the PAD's broadcast via community radio of the PAD's rally at Government House in Bangkok. With hardly any resistance from the police, 200-300 UDD supporters were able to take up residence just over 10 yards away from the PAD radio station. Our contacts told us that the vast majority of the PAD supporters on site were women, while many of the UDD members

were males armed with slingshots, stones, and crude clubs. Some of the UDD members threw stones and used their slingshots against the PAD supporters, injuring two of them in the head. (Note: We understand that both have been released from the hospital.) Our contacts told us the police were able to restore order between 7:00-8:30 pm, and that they proactively did so after receiving orders from Bangkok to control the situation.

14. (U) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Bangkok.

MORROW